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Attack - threat to rule of law

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) has strongly condemned the grenade attack against prominent Sri Lankan human rights lawyer, J.C Weliamuna.

ICJ has called on the Government of Sri Lanka to launch a prompt, independent, impartial and transparent investigation.

A grenade was thrown and another unexploded grenade was found at the residence of Weliamuna, the executive director of Transparency International (TI) on Sunday.

Transparency International Sri Lanka, is an NGO that highlights bribery and corruption and documents the misuse of public property by the state.

Human Rights lawyer Welimuna is a legal counsel in a number of sensitive fundamental rights cases, some of which involve allegations of torture, extra judicial killings and disappearances.

Earlier on Sunday the 27th, he had moved a resolution at a meeting of the Bar Council of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka in a case that involve death threats received by a lawyer appearing in a fundamental rights case against the police.

About ten days ago, unidentified assailants killed one of his clients who had initiated a case of bribery against the police and a fundamental rights case.

Weliamuna is also active in a broad coalition of activists and professionals calling for the re-establishment of the Constitutional Council, a multi-partisan constitutional body that makes recommendations for appointment to the country's independent institutions and higher judiciary, including the Human Rights Commission, the Police Commission and Elections Commission.

The Constitutional Council has been defunct for about two years and the President has refused to make new appointments as required by the Constitution.

"This attack against a senior and well respected human rights lawyer must be seen in the context of rising human rights violations in Sri Lanka and increasing attacks on freedom of expression and the right to dissent, said Roger Normand, ICJs Asia Pacific Director.

"The growing climate of fear and intimidation in Sri Lanka constitutes a threat not only to individual human rights defenders, but to the country's democratic institutions and traditions, Roger Normand said.